



**USAF  
SURVIVOR  
ASSISTANCE**  
RESOURCE GUIDE





## MEMORANDUM FOR THE FAMILY OF OUR AIR FORCE MEMBER

FROM: AF/CC  
1670 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20330-1670

SUBJECT: USAF Survivor Assistance Resource Directory

I am deeply saddened by the tragic loss you are experiencing. While there is little that can be said to lessen the pain of grief, please know my heartfelt appreciation for the contributions that your loved one gave in service to our nation. The Air Force Community has lost a valued member.

The United States Air Force is committed to taking care of its own. The dedication and sacrifice of our Airmen deserve honor and homage to their families who know a greater personal loss.

Please accept my envoy, a Family Liaison Officer, to serve you as a point of contact for continued support during this time of loss. The Family Liaison Officer is a squadron volunteer who will work with your family, the network of community services, and the Air Force system of benefits and programs.

It is critical to me that information on resources and services are readily available for you. Your connection to the network of support services can begin with this guide. Information on the following pages will give an overview of Air Force services and staff who are ready to assist in the event of the loss of a loved one. I hope you take comfort in knowing that if you or a family member ever needs support, it will be there.

As always, we remain One Force, One Family.

*Michael E. Ryan*  
MICHAEL E. RYAN  
General, USAF  
Chief of Staff

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# LOCAL CONTACTS

AGENCY	CONTACT NAME	PHONE
Casualty Assistance Representative		
Chaplain		
Family Liaison Officer		
Family Support Center		
Mortuary Officer		
Base Operator		
Command Post		
Emergency Room		
Security Forces		
Local Police		
Regional Veterans Administration		
Others		

# CASUALTY ASSISTANCE REPRESENTATIVE

There are a number of administrative details to be accomplished following the death of an Air Force member who died while serving on active duty. A Casualty Assistance Representative who is trained to assist survivors will be assigned to provide you with information on federal benefits and assist you in completing all of the necessary paperwork.

During your first meeting the Casualty Assistance Representative will brief you on the following benefits. Please feel free to ask questions.

- Death Gratuity
- Serviceman's Group Life Insurance
- Unpaid Pay and Allowances
- Dependent Indemnity Compensation
- Survivor Benefits Program
- Social Security
- ID Cards
- Medical and Dental benefits
- Educational entitlements
- Future Use of Base Exchange and Commissary
- Death Certificate and Defense Department Form 1300 (Report of Casualty)

You can expect the Casualty Assistance Representative to be in contact with you regularly, until all actions are complete. This is normally accomplished within six months although, depending on circumstances, it may take longer. At that time, all paperwork will be transferred to the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis to be retained permanently. General information about Casualty Assistance Representatives can also be obtained from the website: [www.afpc.randolph.af.mil](http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil)

# MORTUARY AFFAIRS

The Air Force will also be assisting you with burial arrangements. These are professionals who care for our service members with dignity and respect, and are here to carry out the desires of the family. It is important to remember that you have input into these arrangements, and all efforts will be made to accommodate your wishes. The Mortuary Affairs personnel will be your liaison with the funeral home and the National Cemetery System, and will also coordinate appropriate military honors.

Your Mortuary Affairs representative will be briefing you on the following benefits. Again, please feel free to ask questions. They are here for you.

- Funeral and burial benefits
- Memorial service arrangements
- Military Honors
- Headstone and memorial marker program
- When applicable, benefits in the event the body is not recovered.

Rely on your Mortuary officer for information and assistance. If you have questions, you may also, at any time, call:

**Headquarters, USAF Mortuary Affairs at 1-800-531-5803**

While we are sentive to all those who feel the loss, at times we must defer to the one individual who, by law, is authorized to make certain decisions with respect to burial and disposition of all personal effects as directed by the next of kin (NOK) or person authorized to direct disposition (PADD). A Summary Court Officer will be appointed by the service member's commander. This individual will inventory, safeguard and deliver as directed by the next of kin all personal effects.

# **CIVILIAN SURVIVOR BENEFITS ASSISTANCE**

There are a number of administrative details to be accomplished following the death of a civilian employee who died while serving the Air Force. Upon death, the civilian employee's supervisor is notified who, in turn, notifies the employee's local Civilian Personnel Flight or the Air Force Personnel Center's Benefits and Entitlements Service Team, as appropriate. Civilian employees with prior military service may be entitled to additional benefits.

A benefits counselor will be assigned to provide the next of kin or designated beneficiary survivor benefits information and assist in completing all claims processing. The benefits counselor will discuss the following benefits, as appropriate:

- Death Gratuity
- Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance
- Unpaid Compensation
- Survivor Benefits Program
- Federal Employees' Health Benefits Thrift Savings Plan Information
- Death Certificate and Forms Completion Assistance

The Benefits Counselor will be in contact with you regularly until all actions are complete. Upon receipt of the completed forms, the benefits counselor will forward all claims to the appropriate agencies for adjudication. Once all claims have been adjudicated, the employee's Official Personnel Folder will be transferred to the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis to be retained permanently.



# CHAPLAIN SERVICE

The chapel community cares about you and your family. At this time of loss, your Air Force chaplains offer a ministry of listening, support and consolation. Please remember this: chaplains are as close as a phone call — any day, any time.

The immediacy of losing a loved one is usually a paralyzing moment. You might feel totally shocked and immobilized. Your mind struggles to think rationally as your inner self cries out in pain . . . in anger . . . in a desire for hope.

You may want to talk with someone. It can be helpful to share your feelings and grieving. You may have a need for prayer, spiritual counsel, or information about funeral services, memorials, or other religious observances. Chaplains represent various religious traditions and they're prepared to offer assistance. They want to listen. . . they care about ministering to you at this time.

Your local chaplains understand. They have dedicated themselves to providing ministry in times of need. If this is your time of need, you can contact a chaplain during duty hours at the chapel. If there is no answer at the chapel - any day, any time - contact the "duty chaplain" by calling your local Base telephone operator, Command Post, Hospital/clinic emergency room, or the Security Forces Desk.

# FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER

The Family Liaison Officer, a volunteer appointed by the commander, works to provide assistance to families. Their aim is to reduce stress for you during this time. Initially, a Family Liaison Officer will be assigned for each person lost in a mishap and will meet with only the family members affected by that person's loss.

The Family Liaison Officer's only duty is to assist your family during this tragic time. You can expect daily or frequent contact until the accident investigation is complete or unless you wish otherwise. They are there to assist you in obtaining the information you need.

The Family Liaison Officer acts as a coordinator for the key services noted in this guide. With the family's agreement, the Family Liaison Officer would be present at all meetings and briefings where benefits-related information is provided.

The Family Liaison Officer will help gather and track information, attend meetings, provide referrals for grief counseling and be your liaison with all agencies. They will stand by you and your family in the days and weeks following the death of your loved one.

# **FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER**

The Air Force has a network of Family Support Centers to assist Air Force personnel and their families. A list of English translators is available for help. Please call for assistance with

- Information and referral services
- Consultation and follow-up
- Assistance for Base leadership in meeting family needs
- Family life education and skills programs

After any tragedy, consulting with a financial counselor or seeking legal advice is wise before making any major decisions. Saying NO to solicitors, salespersons, the media, or outside agencies is perfectly acceptable. The Family Support Center can be your advocate and their programs can offer objective, professional support if matters become overwhelming. Official programs offered include:

- Personal Financial Management Program
- Air Force Aid Society
- Employment Assistance
- Spouse Support Groups
- Referral for Child Care Services
- Relocation Assistance

You can reach your Family Support Center by calling the Base nearest you and asking for the Director or by going to the Internet: <http://www.famnet.com>

# INVESTIGATIONS

In the event of a fatal accident, the United States Air Force conducts two independent investigations. A safety investigation is conducted for preventing similar losses in the future. An accident investigation is conducted to document the accident for all purposes other than mishap prevention. Prompt investigations ensure potential risks are identified and acted upon to prevent another accident.

The Safety Investigation Board's report is developed using factual evidence, confidential testimony, and the expertise of the investigators. The resulting report is not classified, but it is treated as "Privileged" (for internal Air Force use only) and "Limited Use" (for mishap prevention use only). The report is never made public. Thus, witnesses and Board members are able to freely discuss all aspects of the accident. Persons whose actions might have contributed to the accident can explain their involvement without fear of incrimination.

The Accident Investigation Board receives all factual physical and written evidence gathered by a Safety Investigation Board. Independently and under oath, an Accident Board interviews persons who provided testimony to the Safety Board. Witness testimony is placed in the Accident Investigation Board report.

The next of kin will receive periodic reports on the progress of both investigations until the Accident Investigation Board report is complete. Unusual delays caused by recovery or salvage operations or specialized analysis of aircraft parts or systems, will be explained as information becomes available.

The Accident Investigation Board's report is fully releasable to the public. First, however, the next of kin will receive a personal briefing on the conclusions of the Accident Investigation Board. A Board member or a fully qualified officer will discuss all aspects of the accident and the investigation. Your Family Liaison Officer or Casualty Assistance Representative can assist with questions regarding this process.

# MILITARY HONORS

Military honors are a time-honored ritual that many people find comforting at a veteran's interment service. The Department of Veterans Affairs welcomes military honors at committal services held at national cemeteries.

Military honors may consist of uniformed body bearers, a flag-folding detail, rifle salute, a bugler playing taps and a chaplain. The ritual may be modified or shortened to be consistent with the number of people available to provide honors.

The provision of military honors by active-duty service members is at the discretion of local military commanders. Volunteer groups may also be able to render honors.

If military honors are desired, the family through their funeral director arranges for them for in advance.

Funeral directors may call the closest military installation or service organization to see if military honors can be provided.

The cemetery director will assist by providing telephone numbers and locations of organizations that may be able to provide military honors.

# **PRESIDENTIAL MEMORIAL CERTIFICATES**

This program was initiated in March 1962 by President John F. Kennedy to honor the memory of honorably discharged/deceased veterans, and has been continued by all subsequent presidents. Statutory authority for the program is Section 112, Title 38, of the United States Code.

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs administers the program by preparing the certificate which bears the President's signature and expresses the country's grateful recognition of the veteran's service in the United States Armed Forces.

Eligible recipients include the next of kin, other relatives or friends. The award of a certificate to one eligible recipient does not preclude issuance to another eligible recipient. Eligible recipients, or someone acting on their behalf, may apply for a Presidential Memorial Certificate in person, or through the mail with any Veterans Administration Regional Office. Applicants should provide a copy of any document that would help establish honorable military service.

In most cases involving recent deaths the local Veterans Administration Regional Office originates the application for a Presidential Memorial Certificate without a request from the next of kin. Veterans Administration Regional Offices normally are aware of a veteran's death when processing a claim or a change in a veteran's benefits. Requests for additional, replacement, or corrected certificates may be made through the local Veterans Administration Regional Office, or by writing to the Director, Office of Memorial Programs, National Cemetery System, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420. The toll free number for Veterans Affairs is 1-800-827-1000 and the website address is <http://www.VA.gov>

# VETERANS AFFAIRS BENEFITS

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides services to the family members of deceased veterans. Benefits include Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, Death Pensions Benefits, Burial Allowance Benefits, and Burial Flags. Veterans and their families are served at Regional Offices throughout the United States. Staff members may be reached by telephone (1-800-827-1000) to help you with your concerns.

Casualty Affairs Representatives will be available to assist families when a member dies on active duty. Representatives can obtain, complete, and submit the appropriate Veterans Administration applications. Family members of veterans who die after separation from active duty service can receive service directly from the Veterans Administration. Regional Offices can be called or visited and the staff members will mail appropriate forms to family members.

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation is provided to eligible survivors of a veteran who died because of a service-related illness or injury. If the veteran's death was not service-related, you may still be eligible if certain conditions existed at the time of death. The Veterans Administration pays basic monthly rates to eligible surviving spouses and children.

A Death Pension is a monetary benefit paid to eligible dependents of deceased wartime veterans. Specific categories of eligibility are established to determine this benefit.

A Burial Allowance is a partial reimbursement of an eligible veteran's burial and funeral costs. When the cause of death is not service-related, reimbursement is generally provided as two payments: a burial and funeral expense allowance, and a plot interment allowance.

For more details on these and further benefits, contact:  
<http://www.VA.gov>

# AIR FORCE SURVIVOR ASSISTANCE

The Air Force Survivor Assistance Program provides support to families who have lost a loved one. Grieving families have different needs, thus each case is considered and is handled on an individual basis. The Air Force Survivor Assistance Program will marshal the available resources to meet family needs following the unexpected loss of life. Timeliness, focus, and compassion are the overarching goals in continued service to our Air Force families.

The Air Force is committed to providing support and assistance to every Active Duty and Air Force Reserve Component member and to their families, as well, throughout their military service. Many entitlements and benefits of military service also remain available to retired members and their families. Civilian employees of the Air Force make vital contributions to our mission, which we recognize through similar programs. This same principle applies upon the death of a member, former member, or Air Force civilian. However, the sudden death of a loved one is an event for which few are prepared.

The Air Force Survivor Assistance Program aims to provide efficient information flow, prompt service delivery, and timely answers to family inquiries. By tailoring information and services to the needs and expressed desires of the surviving family members, specific responses can be provided to their unique needs. The Air Force Survivor Assistance Program can be accessed by telephoning 1-877-USAF-HELP (1-877-8723-435). Further information can be obtained by contacting the website address: <http://survivorassistance.afsv.af.mil>



# RESOURCES

## ASSOCIATIONS

## PHONE

Air Force Survivor Assistance Program .....	1-877-USAF-HELP (1-877-872-3435)
Air Force Military Pay .....	1-800-321-1080
Air National Guard .....	1-888-777-7731 1-703-607-5412
American Legion .....	1-800-786-0901
Defense Finance and Accounting Office .....	1-800-321-1080
Department of Veterans Affairs .....	1-800-827-1000
Memorial Programs Service .....	1-800-697-6947
Headstone and Marker Program	
Presidential Memorial Certificate Program	
Military Family Resource Center .....	1-703-696-9053
National Military Family Association .....	1-703-823-6632
National Association for Uniformed Services .....	1-800-842-3451
National Cemetery System .....	1-800-827-1000
Veterans Administration Regional Office	
Society of Military Widows .....	1-800-842-3451
Social Security .....	1-800-772-1213
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors .....	1-800-959-8277
USAF Mortuary Affairs .....	1-800-531-5803
Veterans Affairs .....	1-800-827-1000
Wings of Light .....	1-602-516-1115

Installation Chaplains\*

Family Support Centers\*

Family Readiness Offices\*

Legal Assistance/Judge Advocate Office\*

*\* Please contact the Base nearest you for the telephone numbers of these offices.*

# WEBSITES

Websites and information services noted are provided for information only. This listing does not constitute sponsorship or endorsement of any non-governmental entity, product, service, or recommendation by the USAF or any of its employees. The AF is not responsible for the contents of any web pages referenced. These websites have been reviewed for meeting some of the following general criteria: breadth and coverage of several related areas, linkage to related sites for additional information, current information displays, user friendliness, comprehensiveness, and usefulness.

Parents are advised to monitor any websites that would be visited by children. Some website addresses contain memorials to deceased persons and/or historical cemetery scenes. Noteworthy resources exist that are not included in our list, but would serve equally as well as the sites listed above. This list was not intended to be exhaustive, but as a beginning source of useful information related to loss and grief.

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## AIR CRASH SUPPORT NETWORK

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This nonpolitical, non-profit, organization aids and facilitates the grieving process of people affected by or involved in an air crash by support, referral, and partnership of survivors and volunteers.

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**[www.aircrashsupport.com](http://www.aircrashsupport.com)**

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## AIR FORCE CASUALTY ASSISTANCE INFORMATION

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The Air Force Personnel Center website provides information on Casualty Assistance Representatives and Survivor Benefit plans.

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**[www.afpc.randolph.af.mil](http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil)**  
*click "Casualty Services"*

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## **AIR FORCE SURVIVOR ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

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The Office of Survivor Assistance coordinates resources to support family needs following an unexpected loss of life.

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**<http://survivorassistance.afsv.af.mil>**

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## **COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS**

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This website is sponsored by a national nonprofit, self-help organization. Support is offered to families who are grieving the death of a child of any age, from any cause.

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**[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)**

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## **CRISIS, GRIEF & HEALING**

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A website sponsored privately by a professional speaker, author, and therapist that focuses on masculine grief and healing for men.

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**[www.webhealing.com](http://www.webhealing.com)**

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## **GOLD STAR WIVES**

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A non profit, national service organization website that supports all called upon in a personal way to share in the "last full measure of devotion" to our country and mankind.

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**[www.gswives2@aol.com](http://www.gswives2@aol.com)**

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## **GRIEF, LOSS, & RECOVERY**

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This webpage links to literature and information about loss, grief, and trauma. On-line support is not provided.

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**[www.erichad.com](http://www.erichad.com)**

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## **GRIEFNET**

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An internet community of over 30 e-mail support groups has two websites devoted to online grief support, loss and grief issues. KIDSAID is available for children.

**<http://rivendell.org>**

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## **GRIEF RECOVERY ONLINE WIDOWS AND ORPHANS**

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A non-profit corporation developed this website to provide solace for the bereaved and those who care for them.

**[www.groww.org](http://www.groww.org)**

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## **SENA FOUNDATION**

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This autonomous, non-profit educational organization provides free support for grief and loss and catastrophic loss.

**[www.sena.org](http://www.sena.org)**

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## **TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS (TAPS)**

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TAPS, a non-profit organization for those who have lost a loved one on active duty with the Armed Forces provides a military survivor peer support network. TAPS@aol.com

**<http://www.taps.org>**

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## **THE SHIVA FOUNDATION**

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This not-for-profit, non-sectarian organization website is committed to developing resources for support in the grieving process to individuals, families, and communities.

**[www.goodgrief.org](http://www.goodgrief.org)**

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## **USAF FAMILY SUPPORT CENTERS**

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Air Force personnel and their families are assisted by this website with information on the network of Family Support Centers and programs.

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**<http://www.famnet.com>**

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## **VETERANS ADMINISTRATION**

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The Department of Veterans Affairs maintains this website. Family members of deceased veterans can find information related to benefits and presidential memorial certificates.

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**<http://www.VA.gov>**

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## **WIDOW NET**

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An information and self-help resource by and for widows and widowers facing grief, bereavement, and the recovery process. AARP resource listings are provided.

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**[www.fortnet.org/WidowNet](http://www.fortnet.org/WidowNet)**

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## **WINGS OF LIGHT**

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A non-profit organization providing support to families, friends, and rescue and support personnel involved with deaths, catastrophic losses, and those who survive. Referrals are often made to the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Ellicott, MD, and ADEC, Association of Death Education.

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**[www.wingsoflight.org](http://www.wingsoflight.org)**

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# NOTES

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ONE FORCE

ONE FAMILY